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2021

## As (un)Real as It Gets – Exploring the Persuasiveness of Advertising Posts by Virtual Influencers

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### Recommended Citation

Sewak, Sphurti, "As (un)Real as It Gets – Exploring the Persuasiveness of Advertising Posts by Virtual Influencers" (2021). *Association of Marketing Theory and Practice Proceedings 2021*. 7.  
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# As (un)Real as It Gets – Exploring the Persuasiveness of Advertising Posts by Virtual Influencers

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## ABSTRACT

*Influencer marketing has been recognized as a growing avenue for brands to reach out to a wider audience. With the advent of virtual influencers, brands now have a unique opportunity to engage with potential customers. Given that virtual influencers have been on the rise ever since Lil Miquela was conceptualized in 2017, this has led to a change in the digital landscape since traditionally, human influencers have occupied a prominent space in social media, with the likes of Kardashians dominating the influencer game. The emergence of these virtual influencers has essentially changed the dynamics of this emergent form of reaching out to consumers and their growing popularity only proves that this trend is not going to fade. These virtual influencers have an ever-growing fan base and the fact that they are not real is made salient on their profiles. Yet, social media users continue flocking to their profiles and brands continue to involve them in their promotion strategies. We propose to study the persuasiveness of the posts by these virtual influencers and outline the perceived uniqueness as the underlying mechanism for their posts to be more persuasive. Our findings have theoretical contributions in the literature streams of persuasiveness and influencer marketing. Specifically, we are highlighting the emergence of these virtual agents as marketing proxies. The findings of our research also have practical implications for brands collaborating with influencers regularly.*

**Keywords:** Influencer marketing, Virtual influencers, Social Media, Persuasiveness

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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